Lee Hoinacki

OAKLAND TABLE May 2001

Services, Hospitality, and ...
Stories and Reflections

Filename and/or date: Oaklandtable_Lee.pdf/Oakland/April 2001

STATUS:
Copyright: Lee Hoinacki

For further information please contact:
Silja Samerski Albrechtstr.19 D - 28203 Bremen
Tel: +49-(0)421-7947546 e-mail: piano@uni-bremen.de

Obviously,I should change; but how? I'm quite uncertain. I would like at least to try to do this: To do what I can.

I am free to pray, to pray and think about the matter. I can work out a daily regimen of prayer, much more "organized" than my present haphazard efforts.

I am "free" a good part of the day ... for example, in the moments right after waking up in the morning ... while walking to the office each day, and back at night. And there are many other times during the day when I am doing "nothing," or when I could easily take time out for a prayer ... a prayer for those who have no shelter, for those who would benefit from a kindly stranger; and to pray for light and strength: that I might see how to live offering rather than receiving hospitality, that I might have the courage to do this.

I must take the words of the Lord to heart:

> 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.
>
> ... 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'
>
> (Mt. 25.35-40)

The Reification of Service

If I understand Aquinas aright, he holds that a concept (in the mind), expressed by a word, is directly derived from an existing composite, that is, an individual matter-form composition. A concept, then is a ratio, or a definition of an existant thing, understood from its form.

Keeping the above in mind, how is it possible to talk intelligibly about services? Something occurred to me that may throw light on the question.

Today is Friday, and I picked up the Breviary to read or pray a psalm this morning. For some weeks, or months, I have avoided reciting the psalm for Friday's Prime, Psalm 21 (in the Vulgate), the psalm that begins, "Deus, Deus meus, respice in me ... " Today, finally, I said that psalm. Then I also attempted to understand why I had knowingly passed it by so many times (reciting psalms from one of the other "hours" on Friday morning).

The words of that psalm are three times holy. First, some Jew expressed this lament, this prayer. The Jewish community then took it up, making it one of their canon of prayers, one of the ways in which they spoke to their God.

Then, secondly, as Matthew (27.46) and Mark (15.34) report, "Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' - which means, 'May God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" He spoke the first words of the psalm.

Thirdly, the Church places this psalm as the prayer for Prime, a morning prayer, to be said every Friday, the day of the week associated with the suffering and death of the Lord. Each Friday, all those who have bound themselves to the Opus Dei, pray this psalm, thereby reminding themselves of these last words of Jesus.

Since I am free to take up this psalm, another, or none at all each Friday, and since I am aware of the threefold implication of Psalm 21, I faced a difficult decision each Friday: Dare I choose this psalm?

I did not ... for many weeks. But why not?

Today, attempting to face the matter, I concluded that I avoided the psalm out of fear. I felt that to speak this psalm was presumptuous, somehow not fitting ... if I had a choice. I feared ...

What was this? this fear?

I have heard of servile fear and filial fear. And I guess that the words express concepts that refer to something real, something intelligible. But what was the concept derived from my fear?

I suspect that what I felt - and feel - is not a single thing to which a concept can refer. My passion/feeling is not a singular thing that can be conceptualized. But I think it is real. What is it, then?

I think it is an experience that grows out of a history, out of my life-history. Because of the way I have lived all these years, I was filled with a certain feeling each Friday during these weeks or months. And what I felt included the history; what I felt was different from what anyone else might feel. Each comes out of his or her own history.

At least two lines of thought follow from this realization.

First, it may be true that many realities are so singular, and so embedded in their respective histories that no one concept applies to more than each singular case. This might be true with respect to the notion of services. There may be no such thing as a category, service, much less, services. If this is true, one must work out other ways of speaking about such things.

To use the word, service, in any discussion or argument, may mean to fall into a kind of reification, that is, to give a singular, static (conceptual) reality to something that is continually moving, historically, and, still today; it may mean to categorize something that is not categorical. Such usage would then lead to confusion, rather than clarity.

Secondly, a passion/experience, such as that of my personal fear, may invite me to reflection. Should the experience, to be true, require that I give it some kind of habitual character? That is, should such insights lead to a modification of my habitual stance? of my soul? Can a passion (passio) lead to a habit (habitus, a habitual disposition)? That is, I have it in my power to transform a feeling into a permanent, and good, component of (my) character. I have no power to concretize services, but that very fact may lead me to understand that I can and should habituate a certain kind of passion.

The Practice of Service

Today (April 8th) is the feast of St. Julie Billiart, the co-foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

I also read the obituary notes Dorothy Day wrote when two friends died. She describes Mike Gold, a staunch Communist until his death in 1967, as her oldest friend. Another man, Hugh Madden, founded a Catholic Worker house in Oakland (!). He was killed on a highway in Virginia as he rode his bicycle from New York to la Villa to celebrate the feast of the Virgin on December 12th. He had done this before, and had also ridden to other places of pilgrimage, such as Ste. Anne de Beaupré, and from Oakland to New York. She titles her piece, "Death of a Pilgrim."

She writes about the time she was struggling with the question of faith:

> He [Mike Gold] seemed to understand my misery and to sense that there had to be a price to pay, sometimes a heartbreaking price, in following one's vocation. Neither revolutions nor faith is won without keen suffering. For me Christ was not to be bought for thirty pieces of silver but with my heart's blood. We buy not cheap in this market. Because I was so unhappy I clung to my old friends. I did not know a single Catholic and I suppose I considered Mike my oldest friend.

From what Dorothy Day writes, these two men lived their adult lives completely dedicated to "the other," one to the workers through world revolution, the other to the destitute, or bums, through the works of mercy. Julie Billiart, fleeing from one refuge to another to escape the French Revolution activists who tried to kill or imprison her for sheltering priests, eventually founded a congregation "devoted to the Christian education of the poor," what she had been doing herself since she was seven years old!

It must be true to say that these three persons, in some sense, lived lives of service to their neighbor, the neighbor probably being a stranger. And, as Dorothy Day recognized and felt in her own flesh and spirit, "Neither revolutions nor faith is won without keen suffering."

I guess the matter of service can be looked at in two ways, either with respect to the person who acts in terms of service to the other, or in terms of the service rendered. The individual who considers service can be one who dreams of the idea, who attempts to clarify more rigorously what the concept means, or who carries out some practice of service, that is, actually reaching out and touching the other.

The service given can run from a polite wish that one have a "nice day," through singular or personal one-on-one acts of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, to religious congregations and, further, institutions like airline companies or barber shops or meat markets.

I feel somewhat overwhelmed, considering the complexities of what might be included in or implied by the term, services. How pick a place to start thinking? Does service extend from

the sacrifice of the Lord on the Cross to the young woman who says, "Have a nice day," when I buy a cup of coffee in the morning? Somehow, I believe that it must. If no sparrow falls, unknown to the Father, outside his contingency, then no act, no matter how insignificant and ephemeral, can be excluded.

I think that, finally, I must paraphrase something I seem to remember from The Imitation: I would prefer to practice some act of service, however small, rather than be able to define it, no matter how elegantly.

Services ... and Friendship

Some, in every American city, are concerned with care. How meet the needs of the old? of the handicapped? of children? of minorities? of women? of men? Care appears to depend on need and, in fact, every person is in some way needy. Or so people are led to believe. Because of this belief, services grow.

Caring services mean institutions; one then asks, How efficient is the institutional response? Has anyone been neglected? or, Left out? Cities are judged according to the quality of their services.

For some years, Ivan Illich has asked questions about these matters. For example, are needs a specific historical creation? What does the study of changes in care over the centuries reveal? For example, does institutional care only appear at a certain moment in time? What is its source? Its character? Where is it going? Does the historical notion of proportionality contribute any intelligibility to these matters?

Illich believes that care has deviated from something beautiful - the meeting of two persons, the growth of friendship - to something ugly - bureaucratized "caring" institutions.

Both classical Greeks and ancient Jews esteemed friendship. But the ethos of these societies did not allow one to reach out to the utter stranger, to someone totally outside one's own folk.

The Good Samaritan introduced a completely new possibility in the way one person relates to another. But those to whom the story was given, who came to be called Christians, found it so unusual, so fraught with chance, that they soon neglected a personal calling to individual generosity, substituting an assured, institutional response to the wounded or broken person. The practice of a radically new understanding of friendship and hospitality, in which one welcomes the stranger to cross one's threshold, was subverted; churchmen and women were the most prominent initiators of the mutation.

In an affluent economic society, the principal absence is the good. The growth of the market, especially in the form of globalization, hides this fact; one must fight to see it. Indeed, Illich calls for a certain renunciation of the values society holds dear. For example, one needs to recognize that the universal desire to know, to see, is corrupted by what was once called the libido videndi: One acts out of a fallen, a wounded nature, now as formerly. Modern wonders do not transform the human condition. Illich assumes that to see the other is difficult, nearly impossible, today; to recognize the good, ever more problematic.

In the light of this history, he invites each modern person to think about friendship. Illich embraces the idea that I do indeed have a need - for the other. Through the other I can come to exist; I can obtain my self - from the other, from a friend. This is the promise of friendship, realized ultimately in hospitality.

In a market-dominated society, saturated with services, I find myself confused: How to choose? Two paths lie before me: I can consult a counselor, a facilitator, or I can trust a friend.

Transcendence

I guess my eyes are more and more turned to Oakland, as the day of my departure gets closer. And so, my thoughts turn on the subject of services. In all my thinking, something has seemed to be missing. But I could never identify it; something was unclear, but I didn't know what. This morning (April 9th), I came across an amazing illumination through an essay of Dorothy Day.

She writes about transcendence, and starts off remarking that what she has heard about the concept is usually expressed in some kind of cosmic, not human scale. She then gives a number of examples of how she sees the transcendent in the ordinary. What she takes to be ordinary others might describe as the very lowest, the bottom of the barrel, maybe what is disfigured, or even disgusting. But it seems to me that she remarkably corroborates what I believe Pseudo-Dionysus said concerning predications about divine things.

She cited an experience that I, too, once had, but never knew what to make of it, what to think about it. I was on a bus and some obviously very modest black person was sitting across from me. I happened to notice that he was reading the Bible. Dorothy Day says that she saw men in the soup line, waiting their turn to be given something to eat at the Catholic Worker house, and they were reading the Scriptures. For her, this was clear evidence of the transcendent. That seems correct; my eyes are opened! But at the time I saw the man on the bus, I understood nothing. I probably dismissed him as some kind of religious fanatic, fortunately quiet at the moment.

In some sense, this must relate to what I regularly see in St. Thomas: He cites examples of the most ordinary things to illustrate his reasoning about divine realities. I have only the Summa, II II here in the office, and I wanted to look for an instance. I opened the book at the first article on the nature of rapture (de raptu, q. 175, a. 1), and immediately found what I was looking for! He "explains" the two possible modes of rapture with the example of throwing a stone up in the air, or throwing it down (thereby increaasing its falling - connatural - speed).

One of the many puzzles Aquinas presents to me is this: How understand such examples? They occur, over and over, and it would seem that he uses only a small stock of examples; I always meet the same ones. Now I think that Dorothy Day throws a genuine light on this; she shows what I must think about. I feel certain that the notion of transcendence, as she writes about it, is the key.

She also relates what must be the question all persons who possess even a smattering of faith ask: Why is the immanent God so hidden? People phrase the question in various ways, but she, I think, sees how best to state the matter. Some ask: Why does evil seem to triumph? Others state: The horrors today are beyond anything in the past, just too much. And there are some who despair, who feel that there is no hope for the world, for the beauty of Creation, in either animate or inanimate creatures; people, in their hubris, have gone too far.

But Dorothy Day does not let herself be distracted by these confusing ways of speaking about what all people of some sensiblity feel: For her, the issue is the immanence of a hidden God. Then she knows with certainty what one should ask: How get to the transcendent God?

One of the routes she finds, one she has experienced, bears directly on my question about service. She says that one can begin to see the way to transcendence through desire. Then, one of the desires she emphasizes is the desire for community. She gives the example of the Catholic Worker houses of hospitality, and their farms. I remembered that in other places in her writing, she is graphic, detailed, and sorrowful, listing the imperfections or failures of these attempts. She does not fall into making illusions for herself.

Although she does not make the point here, it seems to me that she's writing about one way to view the Mystical Body of Christ. The exemplary (in the sense of the divine ideas) realization of service is participation in the Mystical Body. All service, and forms such as hospitality, are to be judged as to how fully they approximate this membership.

It seems to me that the brilliance of her insight gives me a way to conceptualize all forms of what is called service, from the military through the auto dealer to the pharmacy. And the accuracy of the conceptualization can lead one to the truth of judgment. For example, What is good in a specific service? What is a good service? What is the good to be sought in services?

The Service Academies

All actions of living can be reduced to one of three possibilities, although in almost every instance one's individual action will be some combination, with one of the possibilities being more prominent. The three are:

- to live as an extreme hermit, a totally autonomous life;
- to live serving another ... or others;
- to live being served by another ... or others.

Except for some Tarzan-like creature (a fiction), the first possibility does not exist.

It is immediately evident, then, that the notion of service is central to living; perhaps there is some truth in saying that it is the basis of all societies.

Most properly speaking, life is a gift, the most precious of all gifts; it admits of no "scientific" explanation. Further, it is the ultimate form of being specific to humans, the foundation on which all other qualities rest.

It seems to follow, then, that the supreme act of service is to give one's life for another.

In the society, one institution is explicitly founded on this ideal: the armed services (sic).

As far as I know, the leaders and people of every organized society have not been ashamed to demand or ask the youth to serve their country, although such service always entails the possibility of giving up or sacrificing one's life. In addition, persons serving in certain other institutions, such as the police, are expected to be ready to die giving service to others.

To freely offer one's life demands character (I assume that the person is rational and not motivated by emotional fanaticism). The secular institutions of the (American) society most prominently promoting the formation of character are the service academies.

Interestingly, only here does one find an unequivocal understanding of the power of the word: Literature is recognized as directly affecting the moral stance of the reader; it is clearly not an instrument for furthering one's academic career. (see the NYR, Oct 5, 2000, pp. 28-31).

Today, it is a truism to state that a "market mentality" preeminently reigns, and such is not seriously challenged in American society. The development of all other societies appears to be measured by how well they succeed in imitating this ideal.

It seems that people have all too eagerly acted on the "truth" outlined by Mandeville in his poem cum commentary, "The Fable of the Bees" (1714). Mandeville's ironic proposition, adopted as a guiding principle by all those who refuse to acknowledge that the passions can lead to sin, to the seven traditional source-sins, gained legitimacy as a social ideal: envy rules supreme.

All those inspired by Christian religious sentiments derive their notion of service from the example of Jesus, the Master who got down on the floor and washed his disciples' feet (see Jn. 13.1-17). But the idea and practice of service in the West, although arguably originating in this story, becomes more and more institutionalized, which means, bureaucratized.

On the one hand, we see many persons personally responding to the example and teaching of Jesus; on the other, we also see many service institutions, from beauty parlors to psychiatric clinics. But only one of these institutions places the formation of character as its primary aim, the service academies.

Certain questions then appear:

- How formulate a critical entry into the idea and practice of service?

- In a Scholastic sense, is there a prior and a posterior?

- In a metaphysical sense, is character or virtue prior?

- Do all other possibilities or structures lead to pathology of one kind or other?

Service in Faith

On April 10, 1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged in Flossenburg. On the same day, in 1955, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin died of a heart attack in New York. Two men who left us a rich legacy, both with the example of their lives, and with their writings. It is said that Bonhoeffer "is the rare theologian whose biography is studied as carefully as his written work for clues about the challenge of faith in our time." Because of the way Teilhard lived his life, especially considering how he observed his religious vow of obedience, I guess one should say the same about him. Which, for me, brings back bitter memories.

In 1960, a friend gave me a copy of The Divine Milieu, praising it highly. Because of the perversity of my mind at that time, I only found fault with the book; I roundly criticized it, and included sharp thrusts at specific propositions. Looking back, I wonder: How could I have been so vain? so self-inflated? so blind?

Teilhard was a priest-scientist, never forgetting what came first. Bonhoeffer was a pastor-citizen, who agonized in his struggle to be faithful to both God and his country. The month of June 1939, when he was in New York City, must have been filled with the most intense prayer and thought: How serve the Lord? How serve the German nation?

I see both these men in terms of a faithfulness to a service. Each, at some moment in his youth, felt called to a unique life of service; but neither one to the worldly high bourgeois or noblesse oblige manner of their respective families. They had received a vision of another kind of service, an absolute giving of oneself to the unknown. The first arctic explorer, whoever he was, knew that he was going into the unknown. I suspect that those who answer the call of the Lord do not possess a similar awareness. All they can do is concentrate on the giving, on the utter denial of self, then attempt to live in faith and hope - in faithfulness to their calling.

That may be the origin of service, no? I see two "poles" in a dynamic relationship: The negation of self-serving, and the embracing of the unknown. I think this is the conceptual and practical balance, not that between self-serving and other-serving. As we have seen so often, one can deny self in order to serve the other in a predictable, routine fashion - generally, through an institutional setting. This would touch on the Illich thesis about the corruptio ... The step into the unknown must accompany the forgetting of self. This is what, it seems to me, the lives of Bonhoeffer and Teilhard teach us.

An openness to the unknown, a readiness to step out into the darkness, is an absolute requirement for service to the Lord, as the lives of the saints make so dramatically clear. But a similar lack of fear, a similar willingness to take on the mysteriously obscure, is necessary, mutatis mutandis, for any kind of service, that one avoid the ever-present temptation of the corruptio ... For the attraction of the corruptio is always there, humming a kind of siren-song.

Beyond this, too, I must be careful not "to program" my relationship to the other, to any other, not to plan, not to predict, not to seek the familiar. That would entail the decay of friendship, the drying up and withering away of love.

Growth in Services

Political parties have declined, interest groups have proliferated ... from 10,300 in 1968 to 20,000 in 1988. ... lobbyists in Washington ... around 500 during the Second World War, today it is over 23,000.

Washington lawyers, fewer than 10,000 in 1970; today there are over 45,000. Political action committees, the finance arms of these interest groups ... from a handful to over 4,000.

Lawyers ... from 1890 to 1940, the proportion of lawyers in the population remained nearly level: about one lawyer for every 730 people. By 1990, the proportion had dropped to one in 300. ... in 1990 ... 281 lawyers for every 100,000 people in America, there were 111 in Germany, eighty-two in England, and eleven in Japan.

Federal courts ... case loads ... from 68,000 in 1940 to over 300,000 by the mid-1080s. ... federal judges grew from 260 in 1940 to more than 800 today.

In no other country in the world does so much government take place in court. For example, in 1960, a total of 200 civil-rights cases were filed in all of the federal courts, In 1980, there were 25,341 civil-rights cases.

In 1939, the national government had just begun to operate an old-age pension system, but it paid for no one's health care, save a few veterans; provided no aid to local education; did not shoot rockets into space; had no foreign-aid programme; played almost no role in protecting the environment or regulating the workplace; did not build and oversee a network of interstate highways; and did not do dozens of other things that Americans take for granted these days as government responsibilities.

Congressional staffs have swelled; Congress had fewer than 2,500 staff members in 1947; today it has almost 18,000.

In many ways, the changes are just as profound as those wrought by the American Revolution ... It is a revolution without revolutionaries, without a revolutionary ideology or revolutionary manifesto or call to arms. ... a people dramatically changed their government without collectively setting out to do so.

Some Americans were beginning to construct the "service society." Others, the activists of the 1960s, were less interested in the laws passed than the mood of the time. Today, we think of music as the purest expression of the ferment of the 1960s; the radicalism of the 1960s was non-programmatic, non-intellectual, even non-verbal.

Probably the single most consequential of the great trends of the 1970s was the collapse of the birth rate.

In 1970, the United States - like every society in the developed world - had a birth rate substantially above the level needed to hold the population constant. Today, not one advanced society is replacing itself. This behavior reflects the genuine preferences of Americans themselves.

That sharp rethinking of the virtues of big families may have been influenced by the environmental panics that the mass media fomented in those years. But environmentalists seldom persuaded people to cease doing anything they really wanted to do (like driving, for instance). People could be scared out of reproducing, however, because they weren't all that keen on reproducing in the first place. Children cramped women's career hopes. They impinged on personal journeys of psychological self-discovery. They interfered with sexual self-fulfillment. Maybe worst of all, they made one feel so old. "We ain't never ever gonna grow up!" the one-time Yippie Jerry Rubin promised - or threatened. "We're going to be teenagers forever!"

Societies that do not have children rapidly age. The median American is thirty-eight years old; he was twenty-eight in the early 1970s and twenty-one a hundred years ago. This middle-ageing of the United States explains much of why crime is subsiding, why Fortune's advertisement revenues are rising and Playboy's are sagging; why blue jeans and khakis are now sold with "relaxed fits."

Those who shunned children in order to preserve their youth now find themselves on the elderly side of an increasingly tense generational squabble over money. Already most working-age Americans pay more than 15 per cent of their pay to support the two big programmes for the elderly, Social Security and Medicare. They paid only 2 per cent when the programme was created; only 12 per cent as recently as 1977. Barring dramatic reforms in those two programmes, the working-age people of 2040 could be paying 20 per cent or more - and that's before they pay the income taxes that support all the rest of the federal government.

American politics has always been driven by inter-group animosity; for example, town and country, North and South, farmer against factory worker, Catholics against Protestant, employer against employee, Rustbelt against Sunbelt. Through the 1990s, it has pitted men against women. Why not young against old? - for the benefits of service.

And if it is young against old, money may turn out to be the least embittering element of the conflict. For here may turn out to be the biggest, cruellest but also funniest irony produced by all the social transformations of the 1970s: the very people who eschewed children in order to hold on to their youth are now remaking society to suit the old. President Clinton neatly expressed the coming attitude in his 2000 State of the Union address. He proposed that the United States should set itself the national goal of becoming the safest industrial nation. Could there possibly be a more middle-aged aspiration than that?

But how will the young people born in the 1980s and 90s feel about living in a country whose motto is Safety First - a society of strict federal supervision of vitamin tablets, warning labels on every appliance, new temperance movements to control cigarettes, booze, firearms and fatty foods? ...

As the feminist revolution institionalized itself, Gloria Steinem observed triumphantly (or was it ruefully?) that her women friends had turned into the men they had once wanted to marry. In the same way, the formerly young are busily refurbishing their society into the safe cocoon they once mocked their elders for retreating into. Once safely settled, they will no doubt go on playing the exciting songs of protest they grooved to back in 1968 - playing them louder and louder as their food gets softer and softer. But it won't be those protests that will by then define the modern world; it will be the consequences of the decisions they made in their personal lives, during those crucial years from 1970 to 1980.

(Based on: G. Calvin Mackenzie, "The Revolution nobody wanted," TLS, Oct. 13, 2000; and, David Frum, "Not young any more," TLS, July 14, 2000.)

An Example of Service

There are many distinct kinds of service being offered and/or provided today. Among these perhaps numberless kinds, there is probably an infinite variety within each "category" - different sorts of facilitators, or counselors, or other service-providers. So how bring intelligibility out of this confusion?

One possible way may be to examine a particular example of what is called service. The most apt one I can imagine is that of The Catholic Worker. Here I refer to the actions of those participants in the movement who people what the Worker calls, "Houses of Hospitality."

These houses are located in urban neighborhoods that give immediate access to those who have fallen through the cracks, to those abandoned at the bottom.

One of the persons doing this work for over twenty years, Jeff Dietrich, writes,

> We are not here to cure the poor or to fix the poor or to mainstream the poor; we are not here to create programs, make converts, raise money, or build great buildings. We are here to enter into the pain of the poor, to expose the wounds that make the suffering of the poor inevitable. We are here to submit to that radical surgery which will take away our hearts of stone and exchange them for hearts of flesh. Anything less than this is pious self-aggrandizement or pompous professionalism.

Dietrich believes that a service program predisposed " ... toward operational effectiveness and quantifiable results tends to cover over the depth of the woundedness." But, looking at the enormity and extent of injustice and misery in our society, one might wish to settle for some "quantifiable results." Otherwise, one is tempted to take refuge in cynicism or some degree of despair. What is the good of handing out a bowl of soup or an article of clothing to one or a few persons? How far will that reach? Dorothy Day writes that such critics

> " ... cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible for only the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalize and transform all our individual actions, and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes.

In any human society, there is always a bottom. Perhaps from that place one can see.

It may be that the hopeless poor who come to live in a Catholic Worker house are not the problem. The problem is rather a heartless society that creates structures that victimize the poor. It is their very hopelessness that forces us to struggle for a more just and compassionate society. The difference between a hospitality house and a social service program is that the poor are not clients who must fit into preconfigured slots, but friends who sit at the same table and tell their stories.

For Dorothy Day, the entire Christian life revolves around learning how to eat together. "Using supper as the central symbol of a hospitable love which reaches out concretely to the homeless and prisoner, we proclaim: Justice is important but supper is essential" (Ed Loring).

True justice flows from compassion, not the other way around. And it is only around the table, in relationship with the homeless, that we can authentically hear them. "Jesus has chosen the cry of the poor as the primary vehicle for his Word," Loring writes. "Love of the other is the rock on which we must stand. Love of fellow believers forms the church. Love of the enemy builds peace and social stability. Love of the stranger shapes our communities into the beloved community - the kingdom of God on earth. In our society, love is most faithfully put into practice as hospitality, hospitality toward the homeless poor, convicts, people of color, teenage mothers on welfare, the stranger and enemy," all of whom we fear.

Loring holds "that homelessness and hunger are not a result of economic insufficiency, but rather of institutionalized public policy. ... people will do anything for $6.00 an hour ... the minimum wage is a death wage. To pay it is to kill. To support it is to support slavery and death. ... The system demands that we keep ten percent of our brothers and sisters in bondage to the powers of hunger, homelessness, prison and disease."

Loring thinks that the need for housing takes solitary precedent over all other human needs. Housing precedes sobriety: "If I were homeless, I would stay drunk. Homelessness is hell!" ... Housing precedes employment: "Employment before housing fits directly into a society forever turning toward labor pools and temporary work." ... Housing precedes education: "Since we require children to attend school, we must give them housing for education to occur. Men and women on the streets cannot carry books and papers between soup lines." ... Housing precedes health: "Who can maintain health and sleep on the concrete in the rain, sleet and snow?"

Compassion is born of relationship. As Dorothy Day said, "We cannot love each other until we know each other, and we know each other in the breaking of the bread." At the heart of our common life, at the heart of the gospels, is the table. And it is around the table that we share food and share our stories. The stories that Ed Loring tells ring throughout with suffering, struggle and a hopefulness born out of deep, profound and passionate relationships with the most hopeless individuals in our society, the homeless poor.

(Based on articles by Jeff Dietrich, The Catholic Worker, May 1992; and The Catholic Agitator, Nov 2000.)

Instrumentalization

I seem to be stuck, one-mindedly focused on the notion of service ... but, according to my peculiar, perhaps idiosyncratic ideas. I've always looked on Dorothy Day, not only as someone with an outstanding vision of what it is to be a Catholic today, but also as a person with a unique and eminently true view of how to live as an active member of this society, as an American citizen. I often come across another reason why the idea of reading her writing is a singular grace, one of those gratuitous gifts that always come my way.

I wonder if her position as a Catholic is best exemplified in her developing relationship to St. Thérèse of Lisiuex; and her position as a contemporary American is best exemplified by her notion of and relation to Communism.

Given her dedication to unorganized workers, to the oppressed in general, and to the destitute, at first she found St. Thérèse simply irrelevant. The fact that her statue was in every church Dorothy Day visited carried no special significance for the young and radical activist. But, over the years, she grew, she truly matured in wisdom. And one especially beautiful aspect of that growth was in her appreciation of and devotion to St. Thérèse, also resulting in the writing of a biography of the saint. It may be true to say that the secret of the Little Flower is this: It is a different secret for each person; it matches the unique particularity of each individual. In this I see the truth of St. Thérèse's secret: It is in perfect conformity with the divine ideas - the source of the radical difference between one person and another.

It may exist, but I've never read any criticism of Marxist doctrine in Dorothy Day's writing. Nor does she criticize Communists for hanging on to "the God that failed," even through the Moscow trials. She seems to see Communism principally in terms of friends who sacrificed themselves for those who are called the downtrodden. She recognized that this singular dedication to the other is what counts.

Last night I opened the New York Review to read a review by Gary Wills on two cardinals, Bernadine and Ratzinger. Wills tries to make the case that Bernadine was the most important cardinal in the post-conciliar American church. And there is no need to argue for Ratzinger's importance in the Church. But after finishing the review, I thought: to read this material is a waste of time!

I recalled a remark attributed to Dan Berrigan. James Carroll had just written a thick book criticizing the Church, and I guess he emphasizes the Vatican. After a press conference at which various well-known people were present, Berrigan was asked his opinion. It went something like this: That's all about the people at the top ... not too important.

I suspect that Dorothy Day would not altogether agree with this opinion, although she understood and practiced this truth, making the necessary distinctions; she was closer to the truth. I think she would say that what goes on at the top is both important and unimportant. She may have gotten this truth from the life of St. Thérèse, and the lives of her Communist friends.

The Church and the Communist State, as service institutions, can be usefully compared. As Illich has pointed out with respect to the Church, the corruptio ... has entered and may exercise a certain dominance. In some sense, Marx had an ideal: a better world; and the Communist party and state were to serve this end. Perhaps one could better understand the corruptio in the Church through a study of the Communist failure. But that's not my interest.

What Dorothy Day learned from the Little Flower and her Communist friends was this: The truth of service is to be found at the bottom, on the margins, even where no one else can immediately see it being practiced (as in a Carmelite monastery). There is a sense - and in this I think Dorothy Day understood the difference better than Berrigan - in which what ultimately matters is what I do, no matter how insignificant the action.

There may be some truth in the position asserting that the importance of the service is in direct proportion to the unimportance of the person and action of the service. I don't understand that, but I strongly feel it is true.

In Dorothy Day's biography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, she makes me re-think the question or matter of services.

I guess that, at least since Max Weber, observers of the social scene have remarked on the introduction and increase in instrumentalization. That is, once disenchantment, or desacralization, or secularization, or demythologization (I'm uncertain what is the best term) start affecting society, thoughts and actions are infected or overcome by an instrumental view of reality. Perhaps Americans have been especially influenced by this aspect of the modern world; it's expressed through a pop understanding of pragmatism, a "can-do" attitude in general, a so-called practical, rather than theoretical, bent, and so on.

All thinking about services is liable to be influenced, or to some lesser or greater degree overcome, by an instrumental view, which includes, I suspect, a utilitarian and consequentialist mode of consideration and judgment. I think this is inevitable. But what if there is another way, a radically different view? It seems to me that Dorothy Day's understanding of St. Thérèse suggests just such a perspective. But to see what this means, to begin to understand Dorothy-Thérèse, it is necessary to perform some mental gymnastics, that is, to forget about sevices altogether.

Illich has spoken and written about an askesis, and he often cites the expression, custodia oculorum; further, he traces his thought back to Greek athletic practices. What I see in Dorothy-Thérèse is a very different kind of askesis, but one that presupposes the acquired practice of what Illich discusses and advocates. There is a possible analogy here to the difference between ascetical and mystical theology, that is, in the relationship.

Dorothy Day writes that the grace Thérèse received " ... made her infinitely daring in her desire to be a saint," but that "Many of the Little Flower's admirers have been frightened by the austerity of such teaching." Where is the austerity? What do Dorothy-Thérèse mean?

Dorothy Day adds, "What - have no human affection whatever? Not love friends and relatives? The bleakness of such an outlook is indeed frightening." She also writes, "She [Thérèse] was ready to stake her life on this renunciation of love."

As every reader of the New Testament knows, such thoughts are not unheard of; the words are familiar: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters - yes, even his own life - he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14.26). Thérèse took these words, took them to heart, and was thereby prepared for her journey - to be faithful to her vocation, her personal calling.

Dorothy Day was a writer; she called herself a journalist; she wrote a lot about a life of service to the outcasts of our society. All would agree that she wrote about the life of grace. But she wrote only one extended piece on a saint, what is called her biography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. The book will never be given any awards as biography. It is a unique document, however, opening up the specific gift to our times found in the person of Thérèse. As Dorothy Day realized, Thérèse was "a special kind of saint for our time."

It seems to me that, for us in Oakland, interested in distinguishing between the truth and falsity found in services, Dorothy-Thérèse show us a way to think. To begin to see what service means, the askesis Illich has emphasized is necessary, a conditio sine que non. But it is not enough. We must somehow go further, into the askesis both Thérèse and Dorothy Day practiced. I think this is true, but it is a truth not all can acknowledge with the same kind of will.

On the other hand, an absolute holds for all: an act of faith in the other, a faith in love, a love in faith. But the Other of Thérèse-Dorothy may not be the other of every modern person. People have to respect where they are, and then strive to avoid illusions.

But if one enters this realm of askesis, then the question of instrumentalism dissolves; the entire issue of services is illuminated; one can even hope to act out of a pure heart.

For those who can recognize only the other, not the Other, it may not make any difference. "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Mt. 25.40).

Goods and Services

Looking at the world about him and within himself in the 1970s, Ivan Illich tried to point out that one must consider the production of both goods and services in any research touching the condition of the planet. As far as I can tell, those who are called alarmists, pessimists, or hard-headed realists continue to emphasize the plethora of goods, and to minimize or ignore the cornucopia of services.

On these issues, three points must be addressed:

- the origin and character of goods production;
- the origin and character of service production;
- the dynamic symbiotic relationship between goods and services today.

Either directly or indirectly, goods are designed for consumption, or use-consumption. Ultimately, the making and disposal of all goods is determined by economics, that is, someone must invest economic resources into the making, and someone must spend economic resources in their disposal, first as commodities, and then as trash.

To make and to dispose are movements, and thus require a mover, a source that initiates and sustains the movement. Historically, the source is threefold:

- the general acceptance of usury - a moral permission;
- the legitimation of greed and envy - a moral authorization;
- the techno-scientific structures for global marketing - physical devices.

R. H. Tawney points out (Religion and the Rise of Capitalism) that the collapse of the prohibitions against usury in the sixteenth century represents a watershed; the constraints within which economic activity was conducted were removed, allowing unrestrained economic growth to proceed. From this activity, the current ecological disasters flow.

But economic activity requires both human actors and hardware. The formation of the proper actors for runaway or mindless economic development is outlined by Mandeville: If people can come to believe that the seven capital sins are, in reality, legitimate ways of behaving, then only one factor remains missing: the necessary and sufficient tools.

Scientists are affected by both greed and honor. Since they are also intelligent, enough see that, for them, the principal use of scientific knowledge today is to produce technology, whose principal use (again, for them) is to produce profit and fame. The market, conceptualized as driving the growth of technological/scientific knowledge, commodities, and services is, essentially, a euphemism for avarice/greed.

Illich pointed out, thirty years ago, that the growth of goods requires the growth of services. People need to be made to fit in a world full of machines, commodities, and junk; people need to be fixed, to be adjusted, to be coerced to "go along." As long as services continue to satisfy, goods production will continue to increase, thereby destroying real goods: soil, air, water, forests, the beauty of Creation.

Therefore, the growth of the service industries - and there are many, to fit every "need," each whim, all perversities, ennui - is necessary and inevitable. In a world overflowing with

goods, services fill the vacuum in the individual soul: macro-level abundance is paradoxically matched to micro-level emptiness.

Further, this also means that a completely new kind of competition exists today, beyond any heretofore imagined by the most "creative" of entrepreneurs: goods-producing investors are locked in a contest with service-producing impresarios; while one keeps pouring yet more things into an already cluttered and overstocked world, the other tries frantically to put something into a hollow and never-satisfied heart.

Charitable Motives

Since World War II, many academics have tended to disregard philanthropy. Some of them see charitable traditions as irrelevant remnants of a tribal paternalism, incompatible with egalitarianism and the welfare state. A hard core of "theorists," still under the spell of Marx or Foucault, see them as a bag of tricks used by the rich to tranquillize the poor.

Two recent books, in their different ways, have a novel, artless air about them. Not only do they treat their sources without reference to Marxism or postmodernism, but they share an optimistic faith in individual goodness and voluntary service. Mike W. Martin's perceptive book, Virtuous Giving, is a study of applied ethics, moral philosophy rooted in practical interests. Robert Bremner's Giving is a historical survey of attitudes to giving from the Greeks to the present.

Bremner's title is somewhat misleading, for the book is a history of charity carried on a skeleton of quotations, some profound, others amusing, many of them ambiguous. Though it is a useful and suggestive compendium, Bremner's work has its limitations.

Both Martin and Bremner are sensitive to the hypocrisies and mixed motives of giving, but their impulse is to demonstrate that philanthropy is a moral force, which fosters valuable social relationships and cooperative community. Martin is at pains to illuminate the nobility of philanthropy and to discount the view that the hand that gives simply gathers. Motive is crucial to his argument, and he sees nothing wrong with self-interest, as long as it does not distort beneficial objectives or "entirely replace altruism."

Since both of these writers recognize that philanthropy is an elemental sphere of social relations, a vital expression of individual aspiration and civic life, it is perhaps surprising that they largely ignore the big issue of charity and politics. Martin, in particular, might have produced a more trenchant discussion of the divisions and tensions between the charitable and the state sectors. He remarks that the state has the "primary responsibility for meeting the basic needs of disadvantaged citizens," and, further, that government welfare programs express the "collective caring of an entire society." These views may be commonplace, but a social philosopher might be expected to give them considered thought.

We might have some reservations about the word "care" being applied to the state, for it is a personal noun of doubtful usefulness when applied to the actions of a corporate entity. What do language philosophers make of that deceptive, ambiguous phrase "community care"? Putting one's mother in a nursing home may have utility, but does anyone really believe that it is a "solemn marking of our human solidarity"? One can only wonder what Martin would have written had he applied his ethics to, say, the British Treasury or the Child Support Agency. He might have concluded that state social benefits are produced without reference to altruism. The state has an important role to play in the provision of welfare, but it is a self-deception to think that we become moral agents through compulsory taxation to pay for universal benefits, which often accrue to those who do not need them.

The issue of the expanding administrative state has an obvious relevance to Martin's theme of voluntary service. As Robert Nisbet argued fifty years ago in The Quest for Community, and David Selbourne recently in The Principle of Duty, the more the state expands its social role into areas formerly the responsibility of families and local associations, the more the individual's sense of morality, duty and nobility dissolves. Of course, governments act in the name of freedom, progress and humanity, but the result of identifying the state with society has been to politicize ever wider areas of social life, discourage pluralism and weaken communities. The fact that personal service and charitable associations have survived the assault of the "caring," bureaucratic state is the greatest tribute to the vitality and resilience of our civic life.

In the West at least, philanthropists and charitable bodies remain an integral part of civil society. Martin contends that, on balance, they respect the autonomy of others and do more good than harm. They promote grass-roots democracy, offer choice in welfare provision, and give a voice to minorities. But they do more than this, for it is their very contribution to institutional and ideological pluralism that gives western nations their distinctive character, indeed their distinctive liberty. As Ernest Gellner persuasively argues in "Conditions of Liberty; Civil Society and its Rivals" (TLS, Oct. 28, 1994), voluntarism's most remarkable achievement has been to check government pretensions and excessive state centralism. The historical survival of so many charities constitutes an improbable legacy in an age of the ascendant state.

(Based on a review by Frank Prochaska, TLS, April 28, 1996.)

Service Institution/Virtue ... ?

Recently, I traveled from Bremen to Philadelphia by air, from Philadelphia to Harrisburg by train, and from Harrisburg to State College by bus - three modes of modern transportation. Almost all passengers on the airplanes, I suspect, fell into one of two categories: vacation or business, spending or making money. The spending and making take place in the global, not the local, market.

It is estimated that the tourist industry, by economic or money criteria, is now the largest enterprise in the world, surpassing both petroleum and automobiles. Airplanes, trains, and buses are integral parts of that industry. From various perspectives, or in various dimensions, one can establish that this industry, because of its malignant impact in these perspectives or dimensions, contributes greatly to making the world unfit for human living. So I cannot judge that my use of these modes of transport was a good action.

In each of the transport vehicles, employees served me. In general, and as my experience traveling by air for forty years confirms, the personnel of the air company were the most polite or gracious. Could one say that their solicitude was virtuous?

Whether a service person works in a bank, a restaurant, or a hospital, he or she, in an economically competitive market society, is required to be courteous. It may be that they are required to practice virtue. The judgment depends on a definition and a hypothesis. The definition: the nature of virtue. The hypothesis: all the virtues are or are not connected.

It may be that something historically new has occurred. All employees in service industries who deal directly with the public, and whose industries operate in a competitive market economy, must act as if they are virtuous persons.

Do such actions incline these persons to acquire the specific virtue of affability and/or concern for the other? to acquire other virtues?

Actions of service to the other have always existed. Over the years, these actions have occurred more and more in institutions. Is it true that the more the institution operates in a competitive economic market, the more it demands that its employees act, outwardly at least, virtuously?

Is it true that such institutions are the principal societal forms inculcating virtuous behavior today, surpassing family, church, and school?

"Rules" for Services

I here prescind from etymological, historical, anthropological, and philosophical questions one should, I feel, ask about the notion of services, for these questions have a certain priority. However, considering the specific situations in which people find themselves today. I assume that much of the activity in any community involves the giving or receiving of services. Human nature, historical development, and sociological realities make this true.

All discussion going toward critical propositions about services would come next.

I came across this short piece by Wendell Berry. Much of what he writes, mutatis mutandis, fits the issue of services, what goes on in a place. His seventeen "rules" or, more properly, practical guidelines, throw light on the matter of how to sustain a place-based community.

How can a sustainable local community (which is to say a sustainable local economy) function? I am going to suggest a set of rules that I think such a community would have to follow. I hasten to say that I do not understand these rules as predictions; I am not interested in foretelling the future. If these rules have any validity, it is because they apply now.

Supposing that the members of a local community wanted their community to cohere, to flourish, and to last, they would:

1. Ask of any proposed change or innovation: What will this do to our community? How will this affect our common wealth?

2. Include local nature - the land, the water, the air, the native creatures - within the membership of the community.

3. Ask how local needs might be supplied from local sources, including the mutual help of neighbors.

4. Supply local needs first (and only then think of exporting their products, first to nearby cities, and then to others).

5. Understand the ultimate unsoundness of the industrial doctrine of "labor saving" if that implies poor work, unemployment, or any kind of pollution or contamination.

6. Develop properly scaled value-adding industries for local products in order not to become merely a colony of the national or the global economy.

7. Develop small-scale industries and businesses to support the local farm or forest economy.

8. Strive to produce as much of their own energy as possible.

9. Strive to increase earnings (in whatever form) within the community, and decrease expenditures outside the community.

10. Circulate money within the local economy for as long as possible before paying it out.

11. Invest in the community to maintain its properties, keep it clean (without dirtying some other place), care for its old people, and teach its children.

12. Arrange for the old and the young to take care of one another, eliminating institutionalized "child care" and "homes for the aged." The young must learn from the old, not necessarily and not always in school; the community knows and remembers itself by the association of old and young.

13. Account for costs that are now conventionally hidden or "externalized." Whenever possible they must be debited against monetary income.

14. Look into the possible uses of local currency, community-funded loan programs, systems of barter, and the like.

15. Be aware of the economic value of neighborliness - as help, insurance, and so on. They must realize that in our time the costs of living are greatly increased by the loss of neighborhood, leaving people to face their calamities alone.

16. Be acquainted with, and complexly connected with, community-minded people in nearby towns and cities.

17. Cultivate urban consumers loyal to local products to build a sustainable rural economy, which will always be more cooperative than competitive.

(Based on a speech published in Utne Reader, March-April 1995.)

Dolly, A Path to Service

I read a review of a book on cloning (The Second Creation) by those who take credit for Dolly: Ian Wilmut, Keith Campbell and Colin Tudge. There seems to be a dispute among scientists, or at least for the reviewer, Derek Bromhall. He wants more credit than he gets, and wants to claim importance for another, Bill Ritchie, a technician whose artistic talents were crucially necessary for the production of Dolly.

Bromhall asks two questions about cloning: How old is Dolly? and, Can humans be cloned?

The cells in Dolly's body are all derived from a cell in the udder of a six-year old ewe. Are her cells older than her chronological age (b. 1997)? "We" don't know; wait and see.

When adult frogs (n.b., not mammals) were cloned in the 1960s by John Gurdon at Oxford, J.B.S. Haldane and Joshua Lederberg (Nobel winner) speculated "on the possibility of cloning humans," and welcomed such manufacture "as a boon to mankind which would enable humans to control their own evolution." Bromhall states that human cloning is possible "on the principle that ... sheep and humans ... reproduce themselves in much the same way." Could one become even more reductionist? and, Can a putative human insult a sheep? He adds that the "should" question will be answered by what public opinion will accept(!).

Bromhall notes that "the creation of Dolly was the incidental outcome of experiments aimed not at cloning per se, but at developing an efficient technique for transplanting human genes into sheep, and thereby creating a source of proteins for the pharmaceutical industry." The company that financed the Roslin lab scientists, PPL Therapeutics, a market-driven enterprise, now pays for "work on a whole menagerie of animals ... Research on pigs is directed towards the goal of producing tissues and organs for transplantation into humans."

Without asking the question, Bromhall provides the answer to the most important issue in the work of these men; perhaps without realizing what he writes, he unambiguously reveals Aristotle's final cause.

Bromhall and the so-called creators appear eager to secure a transcendental historical place for such activities. Louise Brown, the first IVF baby, born July 25, 1978, "hearald[ed] the dawn of a new age in assisted human reproduction." Wilmut and his co-workers subtitle their book, "The age of biological control." In the hyped-up language formerly employed only by journalists, Bromhall predicts that the cloning of "stem cells," if permitted by the government (!), will "herald the dawn of a new era of medicine ... "

All this inflated and repetitious speculation about a new age or era caused a heavy cloud of sadness to descend on me, to envelope me ... and then I remembered Wendell Berry's recent book, Life Is A Miracle. Berry discusses the ambitious reductionist projects of bioengineers like those who made Dolly. Tempted to despair on learning of such vain and radically sinful

activities, one can have recourse to our cultural tradition, perhaps to find hope there. Berry appears to realize that despair, too, is a sin; some theologians would say, a kind of ultimate sin.

(Based on a review by Derek Bromhall, TLS, Aug. 14, 2000.)

Experiments on Humans as Service

James Le Fanu, in The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine, expresses his dissatisfaction with the huge power exerted by modern medical sects [sic] ... Like Galen, he is frustrated by what he sees as the misleading ideologies of today's widely accepted and lavishly praised medical epistemologists.

Editors of The New England Journal of Medicine ... [talk of] "the astounding course of medical history over the past thousand years." Medicine deserves such glorification, they said, because it "is one of the few spheres of human activity in which the purposes are unambiguously altruistic." Well, quite possibly, provided that academic tenure is speedily secured, research grants are generously awarded, salaries stay ahead of inflation, teaching loads are progressively lightened, managed care organizations try harder to be respectfully flexible, and patients keep their lawyers at a distance (in the opinion of Richard Horton).

Harvey should be accorded a special honor since it was he who "introduced the principle of experimentation for the first time in medicine" (Horton).

In sum, "the dynamics of the therapeutic revolution [for example, new drugs] owed more to a synergy between the creative forces of capitalism and chemistry than to the science of medicine and biology."

The business of medicine also legitimized technology as a means to solve specific problems.

But Le Fanu's target is not the machinery of medicine: "The culprit is not technology itself, but the intellectual and emotional immaturity of the medical profession, which seemed unable to exert the necessary self-control over its new-found powers."

Research tends to support Le Fanu's view that genes are mostly a minor determinant of human disease.

It is very unlikely that a simple and directly causal link between genes and most common diseases will ever be found. This message is not one that many scientists want the public to hear; continued political support for funding genetic research depends on persistent public credulity.

Whichever way you interpret these data, how you live influences how you die.

An important instrument was being given to the doctors: the randomized controlled clinical trial, that is, experiment on humans.

The clinical trial is a human experiment, enabling physicians to study the safety and effectiveness of interventions, whether in the form of drugs, devices, or prescribed changes in behavior. Generally, these studies need an ethics committee and informed consent. The randomized trial has become the foundation of current clinial knowledge.

One can imagine the terrifying choices that will be presented when genetic tests become more widely available.

(Based on a review of James Le Fanu, M.D., The Rise and Fall of Modern Medicine, by Richard Horton, NYR, Nov 2, 2000.)

Academic Blindness

I read Dorothy Day's reflections on the earthquake that shook San Francisco at the beginning of the twentieth century. She writes,

> What I remember most plainly about the earthquake was the human warmth and kindliness of everyone afterward. For days, refugees poured out of burning San Francisco and camped in Idora Park and the racetrack in Oakland. People came in their nightclothes; there were newborn babies.
>
> Mother had always complained before about how clannish California people were, how if you were from the East they snubbed you and were loath to make friends. But after the earthquake everyone's heart was enlarged by Christian charity. All the hard crust of worldly reserve and prudence was shed. Each person was a little child in friendliness and warmth.

What I read seemed especially apropos at this very moment, here in State College, Pennsylvania. I have just learned about THON, the 29th Annual Penn State Dance Marathon, which will run for forty-eight hours, and which is organized to raise money for children suffering from cancer who are treated at the Hershey Medical Center. The Penn State University School of Medicine is there. The event includes 250 student groups, 17 live bands (who donate their services), the area's leading DJ, and about 2000 people. The 662 dancers stay on their feet for the forty-eight hours. It is the largest student-run philanthropy in the nation.

How understand what occurs here?

My first reaction was negatively critical ... Another example of naive American do-goodism ... an action that supports a rapacious and corrupt medical system ... a harmful diversion, distracting people from asking why such rates of cancer exist. The fact of children's cancer should push one to a more radical questioning of contemporary society.

I assume that the incidence of cancer is increasing in societies such as ours here in central Pennsylvania. Further, that children are affected by this disease in greater numbers than formerly. And I suspect that this growth is due in large part to man-made factors: the introduction of chemicals into the environment, especially in processed foods and in manufactured drugs; the ways in which people live today: roughly, unhealthy lifestyles.

So, the area around Penn State University has been hit by a humanly produced earthquake, and one sector of the population has been especially affected, children. This fact raises a complicated question, one of the most difficult that people capable of reflection, throughout history, have faced and attempted to answer: Why do innocent children suffer evil?

Persons associated with a university are peculiarly suited to explore and act on the question. But first, as Wendell Berry asks, in Life Is A Miracle,

> Can this convocation of specialists, who have been "called together" to learn and teach, actually come together? In other words, can the convocation become a conversation? For that, the convocation would have to have a common purpose, a common standard, and a common language. It would have to understand itself as a part, for better or worse, of the surrounding community. For reasons both selfish and altruistic, it would have to make the good health of its community the primary purpose of all its work.

The next paragraph begins, "This has not happened in our universities."

Berry is not writing primarily about the physical health of the community, but about the human, moral health of the persons in and around the university. The fact of cancer affecting children in central Pennsylvania is not, for most people at Penn State University, a physical but a moral problem or issue.

From the evidence of THON, it seems that only one constituency of the university responds to this terrible example of human suffering by direct action or involvement. The administration offers its support; others, feeling good about their act, only contribute money. Could one expect more from the faculty?

But, as Berry points out, faculty must subject themselves to an academic Darwinism that

> ... inflicts severe penalties both upon those who survive and upon those who perish. Both must submit to an absolute economic system which values their lives strictly according to their "productivity" - which is to say that they submit to a form of slavery. ... The modern university thus enforces obedience, not to the academic ideal of learning and teaching what is true, as a community of teachers and scholars passing on to the young the knowledge of the old, but obedience rather to the industrial economic ideals of high productivity and constant innovation.

But what might be learned from this situation? One line of reflection might take this form ...

The increase in cancer in contemporary society is due in large measure to the progress of science, especially as the scientific enterprise allows itself to be influenced and/or directed by technology, that is, by practical applications. Both persons interested in a more strictly scientific outlook ("pure" research), and those fascinated by the technological imagination, depend on, and may be guided by, the market. Today, this means new epoch-specific ways of conceptualizing and making money, formerly and traditionally understood as the sin of avarice.

No administrator, no faculty or staff member, no student, as members of a group supposedly dedicated to learning and teaching, can seriously affect the modern Leviathan, the instrumentalization of the world through science, technology, and industrial markets. That is decisively established by the society's reception of the writings of such people as Jacques Ellul, Ivan Illich, and Theodore Kaczynski.

But, as the students participating in THON demonstrate, to be human demands more than thought; it requires specifically human action. Human action, of its very nature, is moral; it forms character.

St. Augustine says that the omnipotence of God is seen in the fact that he can bring good out of evil. Children suffering from cancer constitute a clear evil. How can good come of this?

It appears that the students, with administrative support, have attempted to answer the question by acting, by acting humanly, morally. Their action challenges every adult at Penn State who acknowledges having some vocation to the intellectual life. Their action presents each of these persons with two lines of questioning:

- How think about the man-made evil associated with, or caused by, what Ellul calls technological society? How is this different from the evil resulting from natural disasters? From that inflicted by men such as Mao, Stalin, or Hitler?

- How can I get from abstract or theoretical considerations to practical judgment? What is the good life today? What should I do? What concrete actions would make my life beautiful?

The students participating in THON do much more than raise money for some children and their families. They do much more than provide a remarkable example of how one can combine virtue with fun. They instruct the teachers; they provide a lovely service to all of us who are older and supposedly wiser: We are invited to rouse ourselves out of our academic slumbers, to think, to act.

From Barber Shop to Eternity

In the bus and plane, traveling from State College to Oakland, I read a book, a novel by Wendell Berry (Jayber Crow, maybe his latest work). I had heard about it, but hesitated for some months, undecided about buying it. Then, at Penn State, a former student dropped in to see me, a young man I respect, and he recommended the book, but gave no real reason for reading it. On the strength on his comment, I ordered the book immediately, and then read it during the two days of travel.

One of my strongest responses was a memory, the memory of two chapters in Roger Shattuck's Forbidden Knowledge. In his discussion of Emily Dickinson and an early French novel, La Princess de Clèves, by Madame de Lafayette, he gives what seems to me an excursus on Illich's idea of askesis. Roughly, Emily Dickinson, by renouncing the actual expression and consummation of her love for a certain man, reached some "higher" experience of love, which then gave her poetry a special power and poignancy. The poetry's sublimity, as poetry, was made possible partly through her sacrifice, a necessary but not sufficient cause of the poetry's quality. (She also needed talent and such.)

But Berry's story, a unique dramatization of an unusual kind of askesis, goes far beyond literary perfection. In fact, I kept thinking of the notion, "beyond," while I read. The prose develops strong themes, for example, of Christian theology and history, of western philosophy and religion, of rhetoric, (Aristotelian) logic, and Biblical interpretation, of community and agriculture in America today. The thought continually recurred: He goes "beyond" what I've read and thought about these and other themes.

From my limited understanding of each of these areas of historical western thought and practice, it seemed to me that Berry goes toward truth, truth as found in each of these realms. But through the genius of the writing, he does not present disparate truths, as one would find in university disciplines; rather, I got a sense of one truth. If this is so, a question immediately comes up: How did he do it? The answer is deceptively simple: Through the dramatic impact of a love story which, as I describe it, must appear wholly improbable - both the story, and all the aspects of truth that come out of it.

Berry's subtitle is: "The Life Story of Jayber Crow, Barber, of the Port William Membership, as Written by Himself." Port William is the imagined Kentucky village of maybe several hundred people, the setting of Berry's stories and novels. The barber, whose formal education was completed through a couple of college-level courses in literature, relates the story of his life, a life quietly lived as a bachelor in Port William, a life during which he never traveled beyond the borders of Kentucky.

Truths found in the ascetical and mystical theology of St. John of the Cross are expressed by the barber-author through his story, the story of his love for a married woman, a love he never reveals to anyone. He reasons that if he maintains an absolutely strict discretion and silence, the love is permissable.

In the last few lines of the novel, when the woman is dying, the barber records that she appeared to acknowledge her love for him through one word, giving him her hand, and smiling with a smile that "covered me all over with light." The book ends with those words, and the reader can safely infer that Jayber immediately leaves the hospital room; the woman appears to be a few minutes or hours from death,

I noted that I thought of one notion while and after reading the book - beyond. Another word also occurred to me - power. The writing seemed to be one of the most remarkable examples of the power of words I have ever encountered. Such a powerful expression of truth, reaching beyond the inevitably fragmented character of all intellectual disciplines, is of such a unique amd individual character that I hesitate to mention any imaginative writer, poet or novelist, who might also be considered in the spcific context of this book.

For me, the book was the perfect - in Aquinas's sense of perfecta - preparation for Oakland. Jayber Crow is a barber, he provides a service to the men and boys of Port William. Through the story of his life, he gives me a new kind of prime exemplar of service. At first I thought Berry had created a new literary genre through his book, and perhaps he did. I'm even more convinced that he wonderfully explodes the notion of service. After reading the book, one can never again regard mundane and modest services in the same way. The reader sees that a very ordinary man, a common barber, reflecting on his life in a remote country place, can raise questions about service, questions that lead directly into the transcendental character of creatures, into unsuspected truths about heaven and hell, into the reaches of eternity.

Counseling: A Service

Reading a few pages by and about St. John of the Cross, I noticed that he emphasized spiritual direction. That's not surprising, given the story of his life. Further, his friendship with St. Teresa of Avila would also incline him to give importance to this practice. But for me, the term immediately brought up the question of counsel. Is there some relationship here? If so, could I learn about counsel through knowing something about spiritual direction?

I decided to look at St. Thomas first, to see what he writes about counsel in the Summa theologiae. The literal or narrow discussion is found in three places: in his treatment of human acts in general (I II), in the discussion of specific virtues (II II), and in his writing on the gifts of the Holy Spirit (II II).

Acts done by a person are either actus hominis or actus humanus. Examples of the former might be the digestion of food and, for some, breathing. An actus humanus is something I do in as much as I am human. In our tradition, that means I've thought about it and willed it. If it's "automatic," for example, shifting the gears in a car, I can only do this as a habitual act because, in its origin, I first thought about it and willed to learn to do and perfect it. All genuine virtues begin in this way. (But, to understand what happens in the acquisition of virtue, I would also have to consider such things as temperament, naturally-given talents, familial and broader "sociological" factors, the history of the place where I am, and so on; it becomes a long list!)

If I understand St. Thomas correctly, he holds that a human act (actus humanus) is directed to either a means or an end. Further, it seems to me that his schema of action says, for practical purposes, that every human act is an act having to do with means, not with an end. If I imagine that I do something for an end, that is, for itself: to play, read poetry, empty myself in thought or prayer or meditation, listen to music, daydream, gaze on some beautiful and impressive scene in "nature," and so on through any other example I can think of, on reflection I will realize that I don't seek this act as an end; it is always a means to some further end. And so with every acting for an end. I can set an end, for example, to be healthy or self-controlled or kind to others, and order the appropriate acts to achieve this end. But that end is only a means to some further end.

As I understand him, St. Thomas says that everyone acts for an ultimate end; every human action, explicitly or implicitly, is for an ultimate or final end. The important question is: What is the supreme end for which I live and act?

In recent times, a person who understood this truth with absolute and unflinching clarity was St. Thérèse of Lisieux. Much of her importance, for a believer or a sceptic or an outright unbeliever, lies in this: She fully, consciously, joyfully, and secretly, acted in accord with this understanding. As she herself remarked about her choice of a strict, cloistered life, closely locked up with a few other women in a bleak and harsh Carmelite monastery, "I came here with no illusions." When I consider, insofar as one can know something of her life before and in the monastery, I find this one of the most terrifying statements I have ever read.

For St. Thomas, counsel has to do with those things leading to an end, that is, with the means ("de his quae sunt ad finem"); it does not look to the end itself (I II, q. 14, a. 2). Therefore, since all our acts, once we have hit on an ultimate end, in our day-to-day living - the only kind of living there is - have to do with means, counsel is seen as terribly important. But in those things that must be done to reach an end, each of us finds a lot of incertitude; that's an everyday story. This occurs because such actions are made up of singular contingents. Potentially, these can be infinite. How decide which one or ones to choose? (For Aquinas, the decision itself is made through electio; see I II, q. 13, aa. 1-6.)

In all doubtful and uncertain matters, I need some thought, some kind of consideration or searching (inquisitio), to reach a good judgment. This inquiry into the proper means to be chosen is called counsel (I II, q. 14, a. 1). (Throughout these notes, "proper" means belonging to the nature of something, absolutely necessary for the thing to be what it is.)

He also points out that, dealing with uncertainty, I should consider many circumstances or conditions - all that seem relevant. In popular language, that is simply being prudent. But this cannot easily be done by one person acting alone; I can achieve greater certainty with the help of others, for I might not think of something that does occur to another person (I II, q. 14, a. 3). A common truism touches on this; One should seek wise counselors.

When St. Thomas takes up the cardinal virtues and their parts, he shows how counsel is a potential part of prudence, and is called eubulia. Potential parts of prudence are associated or "joined" virtues that are ordered to secondary acts or matters. One can say that they don't have the total power (totam potentiam) of the principal virtue itself (II II, q. 48, a. 1).

St. Thomas repeats a frequently cited definition of virtue: it's that which makes a person's act good (II II, q. 51, a. 1). To take counsel is among the acts proper to a human. For taking counsel means a certain reasonable search about what should be done, and a human life consists in doing things, the actions that appear reasonable for the end sought (II II, q. 51, a. 1). I think it's important to note that the verb is in the passive voice; he thereby expresses an essential aspect of counsel through the Latin verb form itself; I get counsel from someone else. Further, it's a "bare bones" argument that presupposes what he has written about human acts and virtues in general.

Reflecting on Aquinas's words, something else occurred to me. What he says is obviously true: I live doing things, continually, even, in some sense, in sleep (dreaming). But almost everything I do is, or can be, a means to some end. I very seldom act for an end in itself. So, in effect, almost all my actions - or, practically speaking, all - are instrumental! inevitably (as stated above); and can be instrumentally human acts.

I never thought of this before, and it's certain I need to think about it more; my thinking on this matter is confused, perhaps unsettling.

Should I simply accept the fact that all or almost all my actions are instrumental? That there is only one act in my life that is not, the one in which I willed my ultimate end? The

important point seems to be this: That all my actions be consciously chosen means (through consilium and electio) to reach my ultimate end.

I think I came to recognize this reading Dorothy Day's comments on suffering in the life of St. Thérèse. Thérèse accepted incredible suffering, as Jesus did; she accepted it as a means to bring people to God. Both Thérèse and Dorothy Day understood the nature of means and ends in the divine economy.

To complete a review of his thinking about counsel, I also read what St. Thomas wrote about the gift of counsel, one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. He points out that the gifts are certain dispositions (quaedam dispositiones) through which the soul is enabled to be moved by the Holy Spirit (II II, q. 52, a. 1). His actual words: "anima redditur bene [sic] mobilis."

He claims that it is proper to a rational creature, to a person as human, that he or she move to do something only after thinking about the matter ("per inquisitionem rationis"). Then, since God moves a creature in accord with the way it is (naturally) moved, God acts through the gift of counsel, that is, one's consideration of the proper means is illumined by grace (II II, q. 52, a. 1).

He points out that the virtue of prudence, either acquired or infused, is insufficient (to reach one's ultimate end). Prudence directs a person to make a search (the inquisitio of counsel) among those things that reason comprehends. But human reason cannot comprehend all the singulars and (et - sic!) contingents that can occur. Therefore, a person needs God to direct (dirigi) the searching of counsel (II II, q. 52, a. 1, ad 1). We see a similar or analogous kind of thing in human affairs: one consults those who are wiser. The gift of counsel, then, corresponds to the virtue of prudence, helping and perfecting it.

I'm inclined to think that the gift of counsel, as understood by St. Thomas, can fruitfully serve as a kind of prime exemplar, a sort of Platonic ideal form, there to direct and inform my thinking on all the many expressions or manifestations of counsel in society today - if I do the necessary intellectual work. For I face two tasks: How understand all the counseling going on? and, How judge each instance?

For any more complete examination of counsel, I think it might be good to look into the history and practice of spiritual direction. Citing just one instance of such a search reveals how rewarding it would be. St. John of the Cross states that a good director should possess learning, discretion, and experience (The Living Flame of Love, 3, 30). I imagine that one could usefully look at St. Teresa, at what she says about the matter, and about what occurred between these two people. For example, on their very first meeting, she was able to recognize that he possessed the qualities necessary to undertake for the friars what she was doing for the nuns, namely, a far-reaching reform of the Carmelites.

The obstacles were, for us today, quite unimaginable. This was a time of much snooping and interference by the Inquisition, the Papal Nuncio, Philip II, and the observant (non-reformed) friars.

She was 52, he 25 and ordained a priest less than one year! On his side, he realized that, inspired by and working with this woman he could find the life of more intense prayer that he sought; until he met Teresa, he had considered joining the Carthusians for this purpose.

The meeting reveals that the practice of counsel, as St. Thomas understands it, can take place among extremely gifted persons in a truly exciting way. These two persons, through their mutual counsels, were to give the Church a reformed men's and women's Order, and two Doctors of the Church; and of all the Doctors, it may be that these two are the most penetrating and clear in the question of prayer. They, too, represent, concretely, a kind of prime exemplar of the virtue and gift of counsel.

One final thought ... Mother Maria Skobtsova, an Orthodox nun who died in Paris in 1945, wrote that "each person is the very icon of God incarnate in the world." Simone Weil writes of this in her inimitable mode, too. Dorothy Day, over and over, bears witness to a practical and practicing belief in this truth; to cite just three among innumerable authorities.

It seems to me that the exercise of counsel begins with this belief. If I were to see each person as this kind of icon, I would also see the presence of the Spirit, I would be in a position to be moved by the Spirit, to rejoice in the Spirit, or to be sorrowful with the Spirit. And it is precisely this belief that opens one to the great range of those from whom one can be counseled. Here, I see that the counselor need not be the good spiritual director as described by St. John of the Cross; nor even be a person of faith. I think this conclusion can be derived from St. Thomas.

St. Thomas holds that the fifth Beatitude, which has to do with mercy, corresponds to the gift of counsel (II II, q. 52, a. 4). The Beatitude states, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Mt. 5.7). His argument says that counsel is properly of those things that are useful for reaching the end. But mercy is especially (maxime) useful for this. He establishes that point by quoting a passage from 1 Timothy 4.8 ("godliness has value for all things"), "depending" on an interpretation that stretches the text, perhaps too far. I have read authors who claim that certain positions of Aquinas - this might be an example, tying up mercy and counsel - are rather artificial, more a function of producing a neat structure of order in his overall work than a clear argument that stands up on its own.

I think, on the contrary, that in this instance there are hidden aspects of his argument that give it great power; it has nothing of artificiality about it. The ultimate end is God. As the Lord points out in his parable of the sheep and the goats, the supreme criterion of whether one is counted among the sheep at the judgment is whether one showed mercy to "the least of these brothers" of the Lord (Mt. 25.31-46). Here I see a dramatic and moving story that blindingly illuminates the nature of ends and means in the Christian dispensation.

In some sense, counsel finds its "final" prime exemplar inside this parable or story. But in the histories of faithful witnesses, sometimes referred to as hagiography, I can find many "prime" examplars of counseling. Through them, I may be able to find a privileged path cutting through the fashions and customs, economics and ideologies, obscuring the truth of counseling today.

A Different Kind of Service

To own, manage, and do the actual work of a bakery, and to sell its commodity, is an action that combines the production of both goods and services. Bread, and other baked foods, are clearly a thing, an artifact, a substance, indeed, one of the most ancient. And it seems that, in some form, all civilizations or cultures have considered some form of bread an essential product, responding directly to a human need, the need to maintain the individual and the species in existence.

In more elaborated or disaggregated societies, bread-making is often done not by the person who eats the bread, but by others; some people become bakers, making bread for others, especially in urban areas; the bakery becomes a service, sometimes a service industry.

In Oakland, we have a unique example of this goods/service combination, the Arizmendi, not an industry but a bakery cooperative inspired by the Mondragón movement in the Basque country of Spain. This enterprise is significant as an economic entity; it is a business in the marketplace that does not operate according to conventional economic criteria: the profits do not accrue to the owners, but to the worker/owners; policy is not made by a manager looking to an absent owner or corporate board, but by the member/worker/owners. One could argue that the Marxist notion of worker/laborer alienation is either non-applicable, or irrelevant.

As a way to work and live in America today, the Arizmendi bakery appears to be an especially attractive alternative to impersonal structures (sometimes called systems) and the dog-eat-dog competitiveness of much contemporary business.

In terms of the Oakland Table, a number of questions suggest themselves:

- Does this service create a need?

- Is the service run according to "professional" criteria? Is it managed by professionals?

- Is there a relationship between the service and hospitality?

- Is the goods production another harmful and/or useless burden on people and their places?

- Does the business further cripple people in their natural capacities, talents, inventiveness, and inclinations?

- Does the bakery contribute to or detract from the beauty of Oakland?

- Does this specific commerce on Lakeshore Avenue work toward, or tend to destroy its neighborhood as a community?

I would suggest that the only way to answer these and other questions is to visit Arizmendi, to talk with the member/worker/owners, to sample the products made there, and to sit at one of the bakery's tables with friends, enjoying a cup of coffee and a sweet roll.

But today, Sunday, I learned something truly amazing. I already knew that the Arizmendi is a successful business, that is, the bakery produces a quality product, provides an efficient service, and earns enough for the workers to live comfortably. But I was surprised to find out that they are closed on May Day and Sunday; they have found a way both to proclaim their belief and insert themselves in important traditions in danger of dying out; they have the courage to celebrate the ongoing struggle of the western worker, and the principal east-western myth; they honor both human labor and divine rest.

Last year I found that the chief interest of many natural/organic food businesses was business, that is, making money, by utilizing means a management consultant would advise in order to survive and thrive in a competitive market today. Larger questions of nature, ecology, sustainability, the environment, or fostering a community were secondary, if present at all.

In light of this general pattern, the novel character of the Arizmendi shines out, hopefully as a beckoning beacon.

Hoinacki
Oakland
May 6, 2001